

DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS COMMITTEE
APRIL 12, 2016 – CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Charter: “...recommend next steps to ensure new buildings downtown meet community expectations.”

Focus at this study session:

Clarify problem assessment (do we agree on the problems?).

Discuss the most significant changes recommended to zoning and related requirements.

1. Height/bulk/mass

- 2010 zoning changes eliminated FARs and increased height.
- City must negotiate from a much larger envelope down to something acceptable to community.
- New buildings have considerably more mass (cubic feet); unexpected and adverse impacts.
- Exceptions for towers, spires, cupolas, chimneys conflated in zoning with flagpoles and antennas; may add 15 feet+
 - *Change height but retain “form-based zoning” (no FARs)*
 - *Reduce commercial and mixed-use max. height from 45 to 30 feet*
 - *Reduce residential max. height from 45 to 35 feet (has greater set-back)*
 - *Alternative: moratorium above these heights while Council considers DBC report*
 - *Change zoning so structures are separate from flagpoles, antennas, etc.*
 - *Limit the former to 8 feet instead of 15 feet, measured at highest point.*

2. Pedestrian experience

- Design control articulation requirements are inadequate.
 - *Require smaller-scale components if building more than 50 feet wide (75 now)*
 - *Require more articulation, both vertical and horizontal*
- Sidewalks too narrow and obstructed; problems where side yards adjoin rights-of-way.
 - *Increase minimum to 6 feet, minimize obstructions, prohibit walls/hedges in first 2 feet*
 - *Require greater side-yard setbacks to improve safety at property/right-of-way interface*
- Landscaping is not “generous and inviting” as required in the Submittal Requirements, zoning.
 - *Increase landscaping in front of buildings through greater setbacks or cut-outs*
 - *Implement a more robust plant and tree approval process*
 - *Require care and maintenance plans and enforce them*
- Building materials have sometimes failed to meet requirements, which contributes to adverse community reaction.
 - *Require materials and colors to help reduce perceived bulk and mass; be harmonious with village character*
 - *Require submittal of larger-scale samples; integrate materials and color in 3-D submittal requirements*
- Shadow impacts not assessed, resulting in surprises and adverse impacts.
 - *Require submissions to model shadow effects; consider in approval process*
- Southwest foothill and treescape views impeded; no current consideration in approval process.
 - *Identify key vistas and create requirements to preserve them*

3. Modeling

- No internal city expertise or capability in 3-D modeling; no 3-D models (digital or physical).
- Developers currently provide “3-D model” requirements as 2-D pictures.
 - *Project to create 3-D model of downtown, using extensible software (start simply!)*
 - *Develop in-house capability to manipulate model for Council-directed scenarios*
 - *Integrate developer requirements for digital models with City system*